

Reaching Out



October 2019



Anonymous

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*“Surrendering our will
puts us in contact with a
Higher Power.”*

*Narcotics Anonymous,
“Just for Today – Living the Program”*

From the Editor

We would like to welcome all of you to the NA World Services newsletter, *Reaching Out*. We hope that the contents of this newsletter will assist you in your recovery or H&I efforts. There are three sections to *Reaching Out*. The first section, "From the Inside," is filled with letters from incarcerated addicts, sharing their experience, strength, and hope as they find and maintain recovery from addiction through NA.

The second section, "From the Outside," is an opportunity for Hospitals & Institutions subcommittees to offer their experiences obtained through carrying the NA message of recovery to addicts who are unable to attend regular meetings. You may also find personal experience from those members who heard the NA message on the inside and are now living and enjoying life on the outside.

The third and newest section, "Transitioning from the Inside to the Outside," features members sharing about successfully transitioning from treatment, a hospital, or an institution to living on the outside.

We encourage submissions for *Reaching Out* from members and H&I subcommittees. Please consider that we are more likely to publish articles that focus on how NA has helped an individual to recover while incarcerated rather than those that concentrate on the horrors of drug use. Send all submissions to *Reaching Out*; NAWS, PO Box 9999; Van Nuys, CA 91409-9999; USA, or to fsmail@na.org.

GET INVOLVED AND HELP US CARRY OUT OUR FELLOWSHIP'S PRIMARY PURPOSE!!

Our planned publication deadlines are as follows:

Issue	Deadline
January 2020	15 October 2019
April 2020	15 January 2020
July 2020	15 April 2020

And finally, did you know that electronic subscriptions to *Reaching Out* are free? New issues will be emailed to you four times a year. To sign up, visit www.na.org/reachingout.



From the Inside

Dear Reaching Out,

My name is CAF, a recovering addict clean for one year, eleven months, and five days. I am doing time in a penitentiary in Brazil for another one year and eleven months, but even being on the inside my heart remains serene because the NA program gives me strength to continue on my journey and prepare myself for life on the outside.

Last Saturday I was invited to share at an NA event outside the correctional penitentiary, in a local school here in Brazil. Even though I drove there in a police car, I was moved and happy to be going to the right place. As I arrived, I thought I was going to surprise everyone, but the surprise was on me. There were dozens and dozens of addicts welcoming me with words of experience, strength, and hope. They gave me strength to keep going forward and share my recovery experience.

I shared, cried, and was deeply moved as I was embraced by everyone, and as I returned to the correctional facility I felt grateful to have given freely what was freely given to me by our Fellowship. I have gratitude for Narcotics Anonymous. Thank you, Higher Power.

CAF, Brazil

Dear Reaching Out,

My name is CBR and I am an incarcerated recovering addict. I am serving a four-to-six-year sentence for drug-related charges. My life was in shambles; I was living wrong, stealing, and hurting my family. I would do whatever I had to in order to get high so I would not get sick.

Before my incarceration, I was a mess. I stole from everyone. Even my family members did not want me around. I did not want to be around my fiancée or my two boys because of my addiction, and I

overdosed three times. Thankfully, by the grace of my Higher Power, my life was saved and I was caught for sale of a controlled substance. That was the best thing that could have happened to me.

When I got to prison, I found my way back to my Higher Power and signed up for Narcotics Anonymous. At first I was reluctant to go. I was in jail; what for? Right?! I attended the first few weeks and it got easier every day. Now, a year later, the people in the rooms have helped me in many ways. I have lost my mother and barely have contact with my kids, but as I progress in the rooms, getting help in NA has put a completely new meaning in my life.

I am now two years clean. The members in the rooms have showed me life has great meaning. With my Higher Power and NA, I can live a normal life as long as I live the NA way. One day at a time.

CBR, PA, USA

Dear Reaching Out,

My name is GC, a grateful recovering addict. I am originally from Pennsylvania and am incarcerated in North Carolina. I started my recovery when introduced to Narcotics Anonymous in 1990. I stayed clean for seven years by going to meetings regularly. I did 90 meetings in 90 days. I got a sponsor and home group. I did a lot of service work and, most importantly, worked the Twelve Steps. My life got very good, very fast. I opened up a clothing store, and soon after a gift shop. I continued to recover and grow spiritually by working the NA program.

I decided to move to North Carolina with my son, who I was raising as a single father. After moving, I had saved up quite a bit of money. I bought a new car; however, I did not continue to chase my recovery. I started chasing the almighty dollar. I did not know anyone in town and failed to find meetings. I guess I thought at the time I did not need NA or meetings anymore.

At that point, my relapse began without me even knowing it. I had not picked up yet, but was displaying the behaviors I had tried so hard to get rid of. The longer I stayed away from meetings, the more my thinking and attitude changed for the worse. I began to sell drugs, and eventually was back to using again within one year.

After a couple of years, I found myself broke and evicted, sitting in a penitentiary for the first time in my life at the age of 39.

In November of 2006, my third time in prison, I finally surrendered to the program of NA, and not *my* program. I am in prison again with eleven years clean, and my life is so much better than the hell I had fallen victim to. Now I am serving a 70-month sentence for carrying a gun. In my state of mind, I felt I needed a gun, but in North Carolina a felon cannot carry one, so here I am. When I was found guilty, my first thought was to use, but instead of picking up drugs, I picked up the phone. I lost a few things, but thanks to NA I am still clean and continue to carry the message.

GC, NC, USA

Dear Reaching Out,

My name is RB. I am a grateful recovering addict. My negative behaviors and lifestyles kept me in the darkest life for many years. This landed me in prison. I have never been positively available for my family or for my own son, who I wanted before he was born. My selfishness, self-centeredness, and many fears kept me from living instead of existing. I attempted several times to get it; yet, as I am learning and accepting, anything done half-heartedly doesn't work. I have been shot and left to die, but that did not stop me. Jails and treatment centers did not work either, nor did having heart problems due to using drugs. I lost my mother and was not even around for her due to using. I was not even there when she took her last breath. You would think that would be enough to turn me around, but it drove me further into depression and drugs.

Until I became open-minded, willing, and completely honest in my total surrender to self and the Narcotics Anonymous program, I never got close to having a chance at saying yes. Well, now I have and am on my way to a new freedom, happiness, and life by following suggestions. I have a sponsor and treatment teams as well as a support group to guide me.

I had to want to change everything, not just some of my shortcomings. I can already say it is worth it. I encourage everyone who is addicted to try this simple program. Be open-minded and willing, and allow

your Higher Power to do what we cannot do for ourselves. Thank you. I believe in NA, and it is possible to change. If it can work for an addict like me, it can work for you. Your Higher Power will meet you where you are in your life and take you from the valley of despair into the promised land free from addiction.

RB, TX, USA

Dear Reaching Out,

My name is LJ. I am a woman and an addict. I have walked both sides of the fence with addiction and recovery. I am grateful for the experiences I have lived. After addiction brought me to my knees, I found Narcotics Anonymous and managed to get ten years clean. I was very active in the program and even became a drug and alcohol counselor.

I loved who I was becoming; however, I let a relationship I was in become more important than my recovery. Little by little, I turned my back on my spiritual beliefs and became intolerant and indifferent toward spirituality. Once again, faced with not liking who I had become, I wanted to end my life.

I picked up a gun and put it to my chest, trying to end it all. Turns out my Higher Power had other plans for me and I survived the whole ordeal, but not without consequences. I lost a lung, part of my abdomen, and my spleen, leaving me in a great deal of pain. I was placed on strong pain medication, and it did not take long until I returned to the full nightmare of my addiction.

This time I reached new lows I had not previously faced. All my “yets” had become my reality. This has led me to the current situation I face, incarcerated for an eight-year sentence and with no memory of my crimes. I assure you, the shame overwhelms me. My first few years here I floundered around hopelessly. Turns out there are plenty of drugs here in prison.

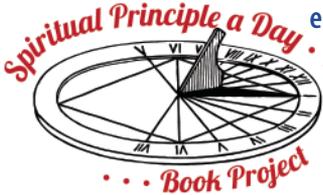
Thanks to H&I, I found my way right into an NA meeting. Though the prison only offers them once a week, it was enough to light a fire in me. I have found my principles again. One of the volunteers is even helping me work my Steps. My spirit has been awoken, and once again I am on the road to recovery. I follow the Fifth Tradition, carrying the message to the still-suffering addict.

It is hard to believe my time is almost up here and I will transition back into society in ten months. Without NA I am not sure I would have survived this world. Prison is a tough environment to survive in, fueled by rage and anger, and there is very little integrity to be found. NA keeps me grounded and sane. I am looking forward to my release and getting involved on the outside. I have missed the sense of fellowship and belonging I felt when I first came in.

I know it is going to be hard because I will be starting from scratch once again. I know I will need the support of a home group and the Fellowship to get through it and to keep myself humble and grateful. I look forward to service work again. Thank you, NA, and especially to H&I for saving my life again. Keep coming back.

LJ, FL, USA

HOW DO YOU PRACTICE SPIRITUAL PRINCIPLES?



We're collecting and weaving together members' experience for NA's next book. Capture your experience in a couple of paragraphs and send it in. We will weave together members' experience to create a new book—written by addicts, for addicts—with each day focused on the application of a spiritual principle.

Be a part of this new book in the making!

Pick a principle and get writing. Send your work to SPAD, c/o NAWS, PO Box 9999, Van Nuys, CA 91409, USA. Those with internet access can learn more at www.na.org/spad and can email input to spad@na.org.

ART FROM THE ZSIDE

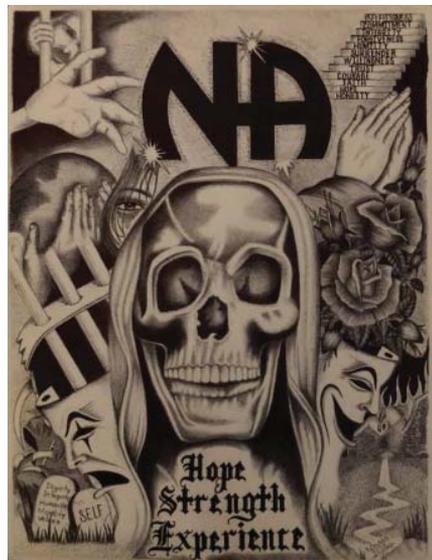
Many NA members, groups, and communities design recovery-oriented art. We believe that carrying the NA message of recovery is a creative act, and images provide a powerful message of the freedom we can find in NA.

If you would like to see your art printed here, please send jpegs or pdf files to Handl@na.org, or mail to Reaching Out; c/o NA World Services; PO Box 9999; Van Nuys, CA 91409, USA.

*The Old Me
is
Dead and Gone*



Anonymous



Anonymous, CA, USA



From the Outside

Dear Reaching Out,

Here is my story in hopes of someone relating and trying to get clean. I was living with my drug dealer because I had given up everything. I did her bidding just for her to throw me scraps. I was reduced to an animalistic level of life, and I could not stay with her any longer.

My choice of drugs was more, and it did not matter what it was or how much, as long as it was. I had lost all hope because drugs are just a symptom of the disease of addiction. Somehow, in 2004 I got into a residential rehab and was introduced to Narcotics Anonymous. My first meeting, I felt better. I could breathe. I belonged somewhere. I fit in. These were my people. I lived and breathed NA for years. I started working the Steps with a sponsor, went to meetings, and even started sponsoring others. I went to conventions and started meetings. I did all kinds of service and even got a job at the rehab where I had graduated. However, I was still missing something—the surrender to a Higher Power. I had reservations.

As a gay person, I gave up the whole lifestyle, but I wanted bits and pieces of it back, so I made up excuses. I wanted to go to the clubs to watch the drag shows. I wanted to meet people. How else was I going to get into a relationship? I relapsed in December 2011 after almost seven years of being drug-free. I was back lying flat on my face again. I was a slave again to the lies and to the behavior, to the drugs, but because I was not using like I did before, I thought I could control it. I forgot that the disease is a cunning enemy of life, and I soon found myself looking at 48 months of prison.

Sure, I had been to jail many times before, but this was prison. I gave up my chance of parole after twelve months due to the disease, because it had such a grip on me. I found myself on a level 5 yard, the highest security level in Michigan. I was not allowed out of my cell except to go in the yard. I had one hour a day five days a week, and 15 minutes to shower three days a week. Therefore, I could not go to meetings. But finally, after 30 months, with my back against the wall, I remembered there is a better way of life.

I reached out to the Fellowship of NA, with my Higher Power and the program. I surrendered each day to the God of my understanding. I gave up fighting. *Reaching Out* is a light in my life because it reminds me that we can do this. Even though I am alone in my cell, I am not alone in life because I have NA and the support it provides on this road to recovery.

I got out in November 2017, and I am full of FEAR—but instead of saying F- Everything And Run, today I am Facing Everything And Recovering. I can do this; we can do this one step at a time and one day at a time. Today I have control of my life. Thank you, NA, for your path to recovery for me and countless others.

CF, MI, USA

Dear Reaching Out,

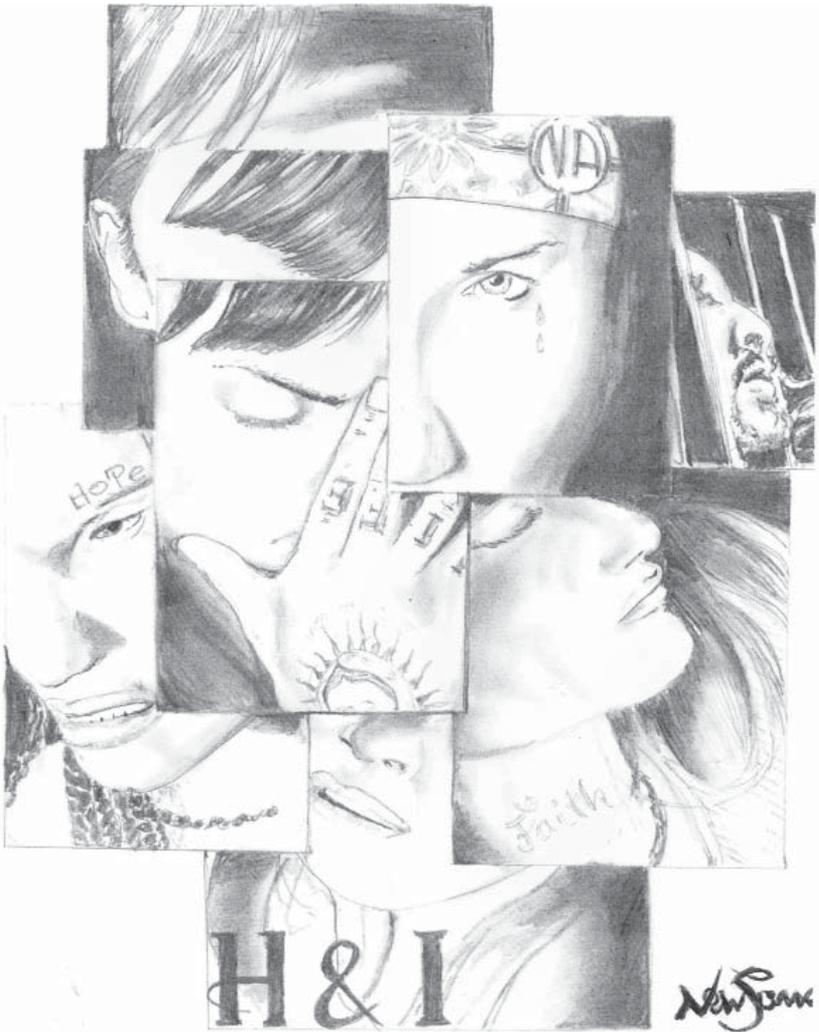
My name is GJ and I am an addict. My story is like those of countless addicts before me. I was released from incarceration at a federal corrections facility in Oklahoma. I served 87 months, and was very involved in preparing for my release and continuing recovery. I have been working the Steps and attending meetings at the facilities. I attended the facility meeting every Saturday morning.

The poor choices I made throughout my adult life are the reason for my addictions. If not arrested and imprisoned for my crimes, I would have killed myself or someone else eventually. My life was a constant cycle of poisonous adventures. After turning my life over to my Higher Power, I have come to realize all the wrongs I have done. I am so fortunate to have a family who waited for my release. My mom helped me to find a meeting upon my release that was close to my house, and I have been going ever since. It really does work, as I am ready to accept the help I desperately needed. Thank you, NA.

GJ, OK, USA

Many NA members, groups, and communities design recovery-oriented H&I T-shirts. We believe that carrying the NA message of recovery is a creative act and art. Please share your H&I T-shirt pictures with us! We would like to showcase your art. HandI@na.org

ART FROM THE H&I SIDE



H&I

New York

Anonymous, CA, USA



Transitioning from the Inside to the Outside

Dear Reaching Out,

My name is WN, a recovering addict. I wrote my story and you put it in the July 2015 issue. I can proudly say I was released on January 16, 2018. I had some struggles when I was released. I went to a town where I knew no one and had no transportation. I could not find a meeting directory or even a single meeting.

I take my recovery seriously because after all, I was a full-blown addict who takes his recovery full-blown. I got hold of my area hot line, obtained a bus pass, and got to a meeting the third day after I was released. I got a sponsor two days later, and also the Basic Text. Soon after, my phone had numerous numbers of other addicts. I now have a home group and a coffee commitment.

I have been to over 150 meetings in 85 days. I have really gotten into my stepwork and work on carrying the message to the still-suffering addict. Many great things have happened to me since my release due to my ongoing recovery. I have been to a retreat with men in the Fellowship. One way to help is to have meeting schedules when you are released. I would like to say thank you to NA and to those who attended the meetings inside and out. You are a big reason I am here today. I have successfully transitioned to the outside

WN, USA

NO ADDICT NEED
EVER DIE



FROM THE HORRORS
OF ADDICTION

Shirt from the East Coast Convention, USA

CALLING ALL H&I MEMBERS!

Please submit your story to the quarterly NA newsletter, *Reaching Out*. We are looking for recovering addicts, like you, to share their experience of finding recovery behind the walls and maintaining it on the outside. Your story carries a powerful message of hope for the incarcerated addict! Thank you.

Please send your story to:
Narcotics Anonymous World Services;
PO Box 9999; Van Nuys, CA 91409,
or to HandI@na.org.



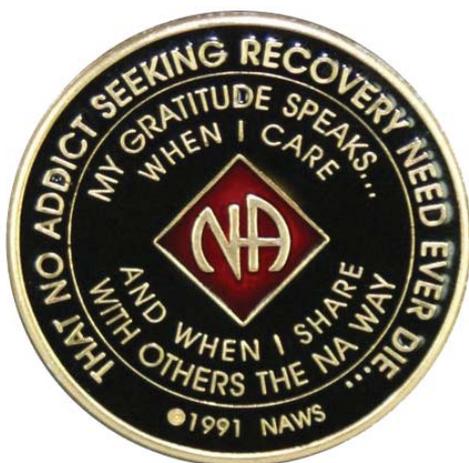
Transitioning from the Inside to the Outside

Whether you left a treatment center, jail, prison, hospital, or institution, you are moved from the “inside” to the “outside” to be drug-free, productive members of society. We think your experience may be invaluable to others as they embark upon their transition.

We are offering questions to help stimulate your thinking so that you may want to share your experience with us; we will publish your article in *Reaching Out* to help others.

1. What did you do on the first day of your release/discharge?
2. What steps did you take to help your recovery in the community? Do you think the transition steps are the same for addicts who are released after 30 days as for those who are released after ten years?
3. What are some of the challenges you encountered when you reentered the community?
4. How did NA help you with information so that you were able to attend a meeting upon release/discharge?
5. How do you think NA may have been better able to help you in your transition, and do you have any suggestions to offer so that NA may be better able to help others as they transition?

We look forward to reading your experience and providing this information to others. Thank you for helping us assist others in their transition.



When at the end of the road we find that we can no longer function as a human being, either with or without drugs, we all face the same dilemma. What is there left to do? There seems to be this alternative: either go on as best we can to the bitter ends—jails, institutions, or death—or find a new way to live. In years gone by, very few addicts ever had this last choice. Those who are addicted today are more fortunate. For the first time in man's entire history, a simple way has been proving itself in the lives of many addicts. It is available to us all. This is a simple spiritual—not religious—program, known as Narcotics Anonymous.

Narcotics Anonymous, "We Do Recover"

Order Form

Reaching Out is a quarterly, recovery-oriented newsletter made available free of charge to incarcerated addicts through Narcotics Anonymous World Services. If you will be incarcerated for at least six more months and would like a free subscription to *Reaching Out*, complete and return the following form.

Reaching Out is also available by a 20-copy bulk subscription at a cost of \$38.05 annually. If you are interested in purchasing a bulk subscription, please complete the following form and return it along with a check or money order.

- I am an incarcerated addict (*and will be for at least six more months*) and want a free subscription to *Reaching Out*.
- I want to purchase _____ 20-copy bulk subscriptions of *Reaching Out* @ \$38.05 each, total \$ _____.

Name _____

Identification Number _____

Address _____

City _____

State/Province _____ Zip/Postal Code _____

Country _____

Please enclose check or money order with your bulk subscription order.

Mail to: *Reaching Out*

c/o NA World Services, Inc. Ⓞ PO Box 9999 Ⓞ Van Nuys, CA 91409 Ⓞ USA

www.na.org/reachingout

ATTENTION INMATES

If you are relocating and your mailing address changes while you are incarcerated, please update your address with us so that we can maintain your subscription to *Reaching Out*.